

1. Introduction

This report is the latest in a series of reports that have utilized Census and other economic data to focus on local areas throughout the province of British Columbia. This report is based primarily on data resulting from the 2006 Canadian Census. Similar earlier reports were based on results from the 1991 [1]¹, 1996 [2] and 2001 [3] Censuses.

The fundamental geographical unit used for this study is the Census Subdivision (CSD). There were 836 such areas defined in British Columbia at the time of the 2006 Census; of these 517 were Indian Reserves. The local areas defined in this study are typically aggregates of several CSD's, often a town and its surrounding "catchment" area. The body of this report identifies and reports on the same 63 local areas as the previous three studies. These local areas are like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle in the sense that they cover the entire province without any overlap. Needless to say, particularly in the north, some of these local areas are very large but sparsely populated. The precise components of each local area are tabulated in Appendix F and a map showing their location is found in Appendix G.

As in previous studies we have not presented results for most of the GVRD, primarily because some of the methodological assumptions made in this work do not seem appropriate for a major metropolitan area like Vancouver.

There are two kinds of results that come out of a study like this, which may be thought of as *descriptive* and *operational*. The descriptive measures use the statistics available to describe each community in terms of its dependence on various basic sectors, its diversity, its vulnerability to downturns in the forest sector, and so on. In addition, now that we have four consecutive studies carried out with pretty much the same methodology and local area definitions, we are in a good position to describe and comment on changes and trends in those measures and what they can tell us about the various local economies in British Columbia over the last 15 years.

On the other hand, the operational results present numbers for each community that can be used to estimate the impacts of anticipated or proposed changes in the basic sectors. They are presented in this report as an aid to answering "what if...?" questions. In this report some fresh examples of the use of these numbers are presented.

¹ Numbers in square brackets denote references that can be found listed on Page 56 of this report.

This report is organized in the same way as previous efforts – the primary focus is on the results, what they mean, and how to use them. Readers interested in methodological issues, or on how the various data sources were used to arrive at the results reported here, are referred to earlier reports and/or the appendices of this report where some of these issues are discussed in appropriate detail.

Chapter 2 presents and discusses the descriptive results as described above. Chapter 3 presents tables of employment impact ratios and discusses how this information can be used. Chapter 4 describes and discusses the changes that appear to have occurred over time. Appendices to the report describe methodological issues and discuss in some detail the more challenging aspects of this work.

Readers of previous reports in this series will find familiar material in this report, but the tables and examples have all been updated to reflect the 2006 data. There are also a few new sections that have not appeared in previous reports: The calculation of location quotients as another way to characterize local industrial specialization (Section 2.5); Shift/Share analysis as an approach to estimating change in local economies (Section 4.4); and a discussion of the accuracy of the dependency results given that they are based on a 20% sample (Appendix D).